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Sylvestre again becomes the mouthpiece of Anatole France. After all, both are true to their own time on this point. Balzac, it will be remembered, was a great admirer of Scott, and Zola, who hails Balzac as the father of realistic fiction, was scandalized by such a vagary. Anatole France does not share Zola's opinion, but there can be little doubt that Scott was losing his prestige in the third quarter of the last century in France.

In the second volume of *La Vie Littéraire* there is some fun at the expense of a philosopher who had launched an attack on the pretensions of history to scientific exactitude. The philosopher would reduce history to a simple compilation of statistics. In reviewing the work Anatole France comes upon some of his own ideas and promptly claims his property, "Je les avais jetées (ces raisons) légèrement et par badinage il y a dix ans, dans un petit livre intitulé le *Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*. Je n'y tenais point. Mais maintenant que je vois qu'elles valent quelque chose, je m'empresse de les reprendre." And he quotes a page of the remarks of Gélis: "Qu'est-ce que l'histoire? etc." The nonchalant tone, *je n'y tenais point*, must not of course be taken seriously, for the ideas expressed by Gélis are at the very core of the doctrine of universal relativity so dear to the author. That he, like Gélis, believes history at its best an imaginative art, and like Sylvestre, would recognize Scott as one of its masters, is clear from the conclusion of the essay. "Je sais aussi bien que vous que l'histoire est fausse et que tous les historiens, depuis Hérodote jusqu'à Michelet, sont des conteurs de fables. Mais cela ne me fâche pas. Je veux bien qu'un Hérodote me trompe avec goût; je me laisserai éblouir par le sombre éclat de la pensée aristocratique d'un Tacite; je referai avec délices les rêves de ce grand aveugle qui vit Harold et Frédégonde. Je regretterais même que l'histoire fût plus exacte. Je dirais volontiers avec Voltaire: 'Réduisez-la à la vérité, vous la perdez, c'est Alcine dépouillé de ses prestiges.' . . . L'histoire narrative . . . est encore, avec la poésie, la plus fidèle image que l'homme ait tracée de lui-même.

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#### THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

*Managing Editor, THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL:*

At the Trade Congress called by the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City on February 19, 1919, a resolution was offered by Mr. Will A. Peairs of Des Moines, Iowa, calling for the naming of a committee to investigate the practicability of interchange of students between the United States and Mexico. The proposition was made for four distinct reasons: 1st, The very

satisfactory results attained by such an interchange with Spain, Venezuela, Cuba, and other Latin countries; 2nd, The necessity of a better understanding between the United States and Mexico; 3rd, The rise of interest in things Hispanic; and 4th, The development of the Foreign Trade.

The last was, for the Chamber of Commerce, perhaps the most potent reason, for it well knew that a sound foreign trade could only flourish on a basis of social and political understanding. To make this a possibility then, the Committee appointed by the Chamber of Commerce began a careful study of the proposition. Correspondence was begun with the colleges, universities and commercial concerns of the United States and a fine response was received. Opportunities were offered in all parts of the country, and at least seventy schools opened their doors to Mexican students who might be prepared for the work. This marks the beginning of one of the most important interchanges of students between the two countries, and the laying of foundations which are sure to last thruout the ages. The reception these representatives from Mexico have received has been in the true American spirit, seen at its best.

To be sure, the growth of this movement will be slow, for Mexico is still suffering from the aftermath of its many revolutions and has just evolved from a severe financial crisis, in consequence of which many of her students are not able to finance themselves in the States, and the Foundation has not as yet a sufficient sum back of it to make possible the help which ought to be forthcoming. The Carnegie Foundation, Institute of International Education and the Commonwealth Fund of New York are interested in the project, but so far have not seen their way clear to back the movement as it needs. But this assistance is looked for in the near future.

One of the projects growing out of the Foundations' interest in interchange is related with the Summer Session of the National University of Mexico. Sr. Gumaro Villalobos, the chairman of the Sub-committee in Mexico and a congressman from the State of Jalisco, conceived this idea after a trip thru the western part of the United States. He presented it to the President, Alvaro Obregón, who not only sanctioned the plan but gave it his instant approval and support. He wrote a letter to this effect to the Secretary of the Foundation and likewise consulted with the National Department of Education to put the plan into operation. Dr. Vasconcelos, Rector of the National University, named Prof. Sanchez, who had had experience with a like interchange with Spain, to work out the preliminaries. Other professors, especially those with American University training, lent themselves to the project and offered their services. President Obregón, in his

natural spirit of generosity, offered free transportation both ways from the Mexican border to Mexico City (or any other destination) with free passports for all those who were bona fide teachers of Spanish in Universities, colleges or high-schools of the United States. This offer went out in May and June, 1921, to nearly all schools of America and met a most hearty response. Nearly one hundred teachers found their way to Mexico City during the summer of 1921, of whom about forty belonged to the first cycle. The courses ran from July 1st to July 15th and from August 1st to September 15th, overlapping each other. Courses were offered in the Spanish Language, History of Spanish and Latin-American Literature, Social and Political History, Contemporary Political History, Archaeology, Colonial Art in Mexico, Conversation, Dictation, Reading, and Interpretation of Texts. The work was exceedingly helpful in acquiring the language or in gaining fluency in the vernacular, while the professors were untiring in their efforts to assist the students in reaching their aim. They gave unstintingly of their time and knowledge in accompanying the students to both near and distant places of interest if it was in the interest of the students. They secured free tickets for us to all concerts and open air performances that one and all bore testimony to the high musical attainments of the Mexican people. We Americans were almost overwhelmed with courtesies of all kinds, so we felt impelled to reciprocate, if even in a small measure. On August 4th we tendered a banquet at the Palm Garden of Hotel Geneve to President Obregón and the faculty of the National University. The large hall was elaborately decorated in Mexican and American colors, expressed both in flags and flowers. After the customary toasts an address of appreciation, printed on parchment, together with our signatures, was presented to the Rector of the University. The banquet was a great success and the Mexican guests were loud in praise of the American way of entertaining. One of the Mexican professors at the banquet asked of one of us why we did so much for them. The answer was that the same might likewise be asked of them, when he very frankly admitted, "But we have a motive in being nice to you, we want your friendship. But you don't want anything of us,—so why do you do it?" Unfortunately, President Obregón was indisposed the evening of the banquet and sent his regrets. However, he sent us an invitation to tea at the Castle Chapultepec for August 6th. I cannot say enough in praise of the handsome manner in which President Obregón entertained us on that occasion. The liveried footmen were in evidence everywhere, leading us to the great hall of the Ambassadors where we were to be presented to the President. He was exceedingly

gracious and chatted with all of those who could speak Spanish. He conducted us through a large part of the castle and in the courteous Spanish formula told us the Castle was ours. Finally, tea was served in the large dining room of state, the tables being laid with the Maximilian silver, china and cut-glass. Never did we sit down to a more sumptuous feast, nor were we more royally entertained. Dr. Vasconcelos, who speaks more English than President Obregón, addressed the guests in the President's behalf. After speaking of the hope of better understanding and cordial relations between the two countries and our opportunities of furthering these endeavors, he said: "This dining room in which you now are, has never before been used except for kings, high dignitaries or ambassadors, but President Obregón wishes me to say that Mexico has never been more highly honored than by its present guests." When the social hour after tea had passed and we had enjoyed to the fullest extent the grand vista from the large verandas, we were invited to go to the theatre at the Castle to see a film of the beauties of Mexico. At eleven we returned home feeling that we had spent a most delightful evening.

On August 12th we were tendered a banquet by the professors of the University at the School of Fine Arts. Nothing was wanting that belongs to a Mexican entertainment, not even the individual presents to the guests consisting of pottery, typical of the country.

A few of us had the opportunity of visiting in real Mexican homes. They offer a particular charm, artistically arranged with their statuary and fine paintings, but are seldom opened to strangers. This is perhaps the only criticism I have to offer, that Mexican homes are absolutely closed to foreigners, to whom, thereby, a fine opportunity of learning to know and appreciate the better class of Mexicans is lost.

I could elaborate on Mexican life, politics, social conditions, etc., but feel it would not come within the scope of the MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL.

As a closing word, let me recommend to all teachers of Spanish a summer's stay in the land across the Rio Grande, which will offer speaking facility in the language, a summer in a most delightfully cool climate, an opportunity to become acquainted with a people much maligned in newspapers as a nation of bandits, but who in reality have fine qualities with a great future and a vision to attain it.

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